

**Dennis Griffith, Executive Director,
Teen Challenge International, Southern California**

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Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, as Executive Director of Teen Challenge of Southern California, I welcome this opportunity to discuss the merits of President George W. Bush's Faith-Based and Community Initiative and its effects on faith-based substance abuse recovery programs like Teen Challenge to help people who want to get off drugs. Let me state at the onset – Teen Challenge supports and deeply appreciate this Administration's Faith-Based Initiative, but we continue to see barriers erected for faith-based programs such as ourselves. Congressman Green's legislative proposal, I think, affords an excellent opportunity to discuss the continuing role of the White House's Office on Faith-Based Initiatives.

Various elements of the Faith-Based Initiative have been very helpful to Teen Challenge. President Bush, in fact, has publicly recognized Teen Challenge on numerous occasions helping to raise the visibility of this organization. Some of the Teen Challenge chapter directors have attended the conferences held around the country on how to partner with the government, and they have found the information useful, although almost all of our chapters do not receive any government funding. The White House office and some of the Agency offices have provided useful introductions and networking with educational and other institutions. These introductions led to a relationship between the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) and Vanguard University to sponsor a conference entitled Strategies for Assessing

Faith-Based Approaches to Substance Abuse Recovery and Prevention. The tools developed in that conference could be helpful in developing assessment protocols. The federally sponsored Center for the Application of Substance Abuse Technologies at the University of Reno has been working with Vanguard University of Southern California on a curriculum and training materials for Teen Challenge recovery providers, and we look forward to the completion of these materials.

Teen Challenge also has benefited from SAMHSA's development of prevention materials, which are consistent with Teen Challenge's work in educating young people in schools, churches, and other locations. We have made use of the educational aids, promotional materials, databases, and clearinghouses which SAMHSA provides free of charge. In addition we have benefited by the materials developed by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, Media Campaign.

We have also benefited by being involved in meaningful dialogue concerning the President's Access to Recovery Initiative with SAMHSA, the State of California, and others.

Teen Challenge: A Faith-Based Substance Abuse Recovery Program

The mission of Teen Challenge is to provide youth, adults and families an effective and comprehensive faith-based solution to drug and alcohol addiction and other life controlling problems. Our objectives are to enable individuals to find freedom from addictive behavior, and to become socially and emotionally healthy, physically well and spiritually alive. Through

committed staff and effective programs, Teen Challenge's programs and staff wish to produce graduates who function responsibly and productively in society, and who have healthy relationships in the work place, family, church and community. Teen Challenge offers assistance to people from all backgrounds, but especially target the urban poor, women and ethnic minorities.

Since its founding by David Wilkerson in 1958, our faith-based network has grown into the largest of its kind in the world. Teen Challenge operates 185 centers here in the United States and an additional 370 centers in 85 countries throughout the world.

Teen Challenge has a well-established track record, and is recognized as one of the largest and most effective faith-based substance abuse prevention and recovery programs in the country. More than 2,000 men and women graduate annually from our one-year residential recovery programs in the United States alone. Anywhere from 20% to as much as 50% of participants (depending upon the chapter) in the one-year residential recovery programs have been assigned to us by the courts.

The fact that so many judges, probation and parole officers make referrals to Teen Challenge is just one indication of the recognized effectiveness of the program.

The Teen Challenge Organization and Program:

The Teen Challenge network is a confederation of autonomous local centers each with its own volunteer board of directors. Local centers tailor programs to meet the contextual needs of their respective communities and generate operating funds from local individuals, churches, community organizations, businesses and their own work programs. Thousands of volunteers recruited largely from local churches, contribute valuable time and skills, thus making it possible for Teen Challenge centers to operate with extremely low overhead.

The Teen Challenge National Office is located in Springfield, MO, and supports the network of local chapters by monitoring agreed-upon uniform accrediting standards, providing training and materials, and creating opportunities for the chapters to share information and support through conferences held each year.

Throughout our history, Teen Challenge has contended that the fundamental reason for our success in helping people with life controlling problems through our residential program, typically drug addiction, is because these individuals have had a spiritual transforming experience as an act of God's grace. This perspective produces a sense of dignity, self-worth, hope and personal empowerment. That is the foundation and core of our residential program. In addition to this, Teen Challenge provides a range of outpatient and prevention services and a variety of holistic approaches to substance abuse prevention and recovery that include:

- Outpatient recovery programs
- Life and job skills training

- Prevention services
- Formal and informal support structures
- Out-of-school learning centers and clubs, mentoring, camping, recreational and cultural activities for children-at-risk and their families.

Most of the residential programs are for adults; the preventions programs target teens and adolescents. A central focus of the Teen Challenge centers is the residential program. Typically one year in length, it offers an environment of therapeutic support and spiritual formation. The program, in which entry and enrollment is always voluntary, requires discipline, responsible decision-making and accountability. Students receive instruction in the fundamental tenets of Christian living, and participate in daily devotions, chapels, church services and outreach activities. Those enrolled in the program are taught how to translate creed into conduct; faith into practice; and doctrine into daily living. Throughout their one-year experience they are equipped with functional tools - including job skills and vocational technical training - to assist them in re-entering society as productive and healthy people. Entry into these in-residence program is voluntary, and each prospective student clearly understands the program's distinctiveness, recovery models and services, intensity, duration and expectations.

By developing the self-esteem of formerly drug-addicted persons, by providing hope and arming them with skills applicable to the larger social system, Teen Challenge enables graduates to take part in the larger social and economic struggles for a better life and more secure future when they re-enter society. Ultimately, by empowering people who were previously alienated from their families and communities, with a horizontal linkage from life in the more sheltered environment

of the Teen Challenge center, to the arena of daily life where they will have direct access to educational, vocational, and social opportunities within society, Teen Challenge has proved to be a significant agent of social and spiritual change.

Teen Challenge Staff:

Many of our most effective workers are former drug addicts and graduates of the Teen Challenge recovery program. They undergo a rigorous training program and are supervised by Teen Challenge chapter directors who also are fully trained in management, leadership, human resources, financial accountability, and the Teen Challenge accreditation standards and curriculum. Profiles of the staff demonstrate people of unusual commitment and devotion. Their work demands focus, and a willingness to invest themselves in the lives of people afflicted with horrific problems. They consistently go beyond the reasonable requirements of the line of duty, receive minimal compensation, and do so often at great personal sacrifice. This cross-section of people and personalities, who have shaped the character of the program, are the rank and file staff of every Teen Challenge center.

On a personal note, let me say that I am a Teen Challenge graduate. I made serious mistakes earlier in my own life. Through Teen Challenge I was given an opportunity to change and become a productive citizen. Not many youth are so fortunate. Like other Teen Challenge program directors, I've dedicated my life to help these children, youth, and adults reach their potential in life and avoid those same mistakes that I made.

Because our directors and staff are an integral part of the grassroots communities we serve, they understand the structural factors - the environment and the personal challenges faced by individuals - that move people toward drug addictions and other life-controlling problems. In response, we have produced programs and strategies that provide these youth, adults, and families with faith-based solutions to their seemingly insurmountable problems.

Direct vs. Indirect Funding and the Licensing Dilemma:

Teen Challenge fully acknowledges, understands, and recognizes that most of our residential programs will not be eligible for direct government support. However, it is our understanding that the concept of indirect funding would allow individuals who qualify for certain entitlements— such as food stamps, Access to Recovery vouchers, etc.—to use these benefits at institutions of their choice. It is further our understanding that such indirect funding programs do not raise any Constitutional church/state issues.

However, even as there is an effort to create voucher programs to allow such individual choice—such as the Access to Recovery program—, additional barriers emerge. There has been extensive debate about the “licensing or certification” of faith-based substance abuse and recovery residential programs, such as Teen Challenge. At present only 5 percent of our 185 Teen Challenge Centers are licensed by the state, even though we emphasize both accountability and demonstrated effectiveness. As many of you know, the regulations for residential programs vary widely from state to state, but even more challenging is the lack of recognition by federal and state agencies. Since a distinct classification for residential recovery programs like Teen

Challenge has never been established, "recognition" has been illusive. Subsequently, Teen Challenge, for the most part, is not a "recognized" drug and alcohol program for Federal purposes and the process to qualify for federally supported grant programs or vouchers is extraordinarily complex. Ironically, over 30% percent of all Teen Challenge clients are referred by the courts despite our lack of recognition.

Teen Challenge would like to resolve these licensing and credentialing issues in a manner that safeguards the integrity of our mission and objectives.

Moreover, the licensing or recognition issue affects the ability of our program participants to access even indirect payments such as food stamps. Teen Challenge chapters in Texas.

Massachusetts, Florida, Oregon, and other states have been denied food stamps because they are not "licensed." Teen Challenge chapter in some of these states, like Texas and Massachusetts, had been able to receive Food Stamps from qualified participants for many years, but just recently were taken off the eligibility rolls.. The reason State governments gave for taking them off, we were told, was because "it was a policy of the Federal Department of Agriculture to require licensing of all programs to meet eligibility requirements." Clarification of this issue from the U.S. Department of Agriculture has been difficult. In Florida, the licensing requirement for participation in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program has become more restrictive, making it impossible for the Teen Challenge chapter there to continue providing TANF program support services. As a result of these new barriers and the rationale given for them, we are concerned about the implementation of the Access to Recovery voucher program.

On the one hand the Faith-Based Initiative encourages faith-based organizations to become more involved with the government in addressing social welfare issues. On the other hand, Federal, state, and sometimes local government keep raising the bar to our involvement, or don't have a system in place that recognizes our type of faith-based program.

In the field of substance abuse recovery, the methods and strategies implemented by Teen Challenge to achieve our goals and objectives differ considerably from those of clinical or traditional programs. While we recognize the need to consider the meaning, value and significance of outside accreditation, the components of recognition and classification should focus on the leadership, management, strategies, and also performance outcomes suitable for a faith-based approach to drug recovery.

For example, curriculum should reflect the essence of Teen Challenge's mission and objectives: content that is contextual and applicable; training that is appropriate for their methods and strategies; and programs that are suitable for the purpose for which they are intended. In short, assessment and recognition should focus upon the capacity of Teen Challenge to carry out with competence, the programs and strategies that correspond to their expressed aims and objectives. Similarly, evaluation and assessment should measure whether staff members have received the appropriate training that develops the skills and tools enabling them to implement the strategies that fulfill their goals.

Because of the scarcity of precedent models and the apparent lack of precise definitions of our essential character, the consequence has been that we struggle to participate in the Access to

Recovery initiative. In spite of the complexity, we feel that the time has come for a substantial action. It will not be easy to establish and assess flexible and acceptable standards, but Teen Challenge is anxious to work with qualified practitioners and scholars from our own faith-based traditions as well as experts from federal and state agencies in order to establish an adequate classification. At the end of the day, what could be learned from this collaborative process would serve as a diagnostic tool for Teen Challenge, benefit similar programs, and contribute to the larger field of substance abuse prevention and recovery.

We propose that a “residential recovery support program” definition be created that would make it possible for addicts to have a genuine choice among residential chemical dependency programs. We believe the criteria for this new category should be performance- or results-based. And without question, any program entrusted with affecting people’s lives should meet standards of health and safety and financial accountability, all of which are presently met by Teen Challenge chapters.

Such a residential recovery support program could provide services such as:

- Long-term residential drug and alcohol-free environment
- Peer to peer mentoring and coaching
- Life skills classes, money management parenting, social skills
- Education, GED classes, literacy, study skills, computer classes
- Career planning, job skills training, employment behavior, resume writing
- Exercise, music, drama, recreation, social activities

- Spiritual instruction and support
- Reentry assistance, housing, transportation, job search assistance
- Referrals

Clearly, certification standards appropriate for clinical or traditional treatment programs are not wholly adequate for the faith-based counterparts. A redefinition of certification standards that would take into account the mission and method of faith-based recovery programs would provide Teen Challenge the equal access to the recovery resources options available to traditional treatment programs. Most importantly, it would offer those in need of addiction relief an equal choice between traditional approaches and faith-based recovery programs.

Conclusion

Teen Challenge has demonstrated our potential for enabling and empowering large numbers of people, formerly with life controlling problems, to re-enter society as productive citizens. In the process, we have also created institutional structures capable of performing various educational, vocational, and social service functions. This national network of autonomous community centers should stand at the vanguard--not at the margins--in efforts to address a national crisis of drug addiction. Teen Challenge looks forward to a collaborative effort that could lead to a formal recognition of our program by State and Federal government agencies.

In conclusion, I want to stress that we support the President's Faith-Based Initiative and desire that the efforts related to the initiative continue, but also be broadened. Significant progress can

still be made to help level the playing field and remove barriers. As you will be able to see on the attached DVD (see DVD, President Reagan Remarks on Teen Challenge) our country's leadership has been involved in Faith Based programs for many years and these efforts should be a permanent part of our government's efforts.

I applaud all of the President's efforts to help heal those who are hurt, even those who have made mistakes in life concerning drugs and alcohol. Each time the President mentions this topic, he lifts the spirits of recovering drug addicts and alcoholics across America, giving them hope and a sense of dignity. And for that I am eternally grateful.

I also want to express my appreciation to Directors Charles Curie (SAMHSA), John Walters (ONDCP), and the members of the California Access to Recovery Effort (CARE) who have aided and welcomed faith-based organizations.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Dennis Griffith

Executive Director of Teen Challenge International, Southern California

Dennis Griffith is the Executive Director of Teen Challenge International, Southern California and has served the organization for 28 years. Under Griffith's leadership the Southern California organization has grown to be a dynamic network of 10 centers providing youth, adults and

families with effective and comprehensive drug prevention services including an acclaimed faith-based residential program for 500 young adults who are addicted to drugs or alcohol. On March 26, 2003, Dennis received a special honor and was appointed by President George W. Bush to the Advisory Commission on Drug-Free Community Programs in the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. The eleven-member Commission advises the President through John Walters, the Director of National Drug Control Policy, on matters related to the prevention and treatment of substance abuse.